



*The Literary Magazine
of
Mount Wachusett Community College*

Vol. 8 No. 1 '78

PREFACE

We live in a world today where technology and business take precedence over the humanities and arts. Even in schools there is an obvious decline in attention towards the humanities. If people are to continue growing and bettering themselves and the world they must live in, the humanities and arts will have to come off dusty shelves and enjoy a revival. With such a revival, business and technology will also benefit, since people will benefit. A much more satisfying, fulfilling, rewarding life will become a reality for the individual and therefore the masses when the humanities can at least exist in harmony with technology. It will happen because it has to happen.

In retrospect, the *i* magazine is proud to be dedicated to such an ideal cause. The student works represented in this publication are from real people about real people and their experiences. The students who wrote these pieces want to share them with other people, hopefully to expose whatever little aspect of life they experience. It is my opinion that the poetry, prose, essays, or short stories in this magazine deserve to be shared by as many people possible. It is unfortunate however, that many other fine submissions were not able to be printed in this issue of *i* because of budget and space requirements. Hopefully they will eventually become published sometime, somewhere for they are deserving. I hope everyone enjoys this publication of *i* at least for its entertainment value!

john cotter



THE WESTFORD ORCHARD

I suspect that it is human nature that makes a person take leave of all that is a part of their life and wander off some place special to them. The orchard in Westford satisfies this need in me.

Set high in the center of town the orchard appears to run on forever, rolling hill after hill. Sitting quietly I can hear the undefinable sounds of wildlife. The roaring rushing streams sometimes seem like tremors in the earth, while at other times whisper past. Even the winds in gust or stagnant stanzas can be heard when all is silent.

In the fall migrating birds plummet, hundreds at a time in V formation, screaming to the ground below. Gliding with graceful soaring strides the birds sweep the ground, dodging brush and grass, finally perching, waiting till all have joined for the feed. The apple tree branches cluttered with dark figures bow to the ground, as hundreds upon hundreds screech a signal. Fluttering feathers slapping fill the air, and in one incredible second the orchard stands bare.

The trees stretch rows upon rows, in ten or twenty, equally spaced apart. Blooming fruit fill their branches which pulsate like arteries reaching for the ventricles of heaven. The aged foundation of the town itself, still breathing life.

In the orchards magnificent innocence, freedom is an abundant virtue. The unspoiled landscape, rich with youth stands year after year. The orchard will remain long after my death in its entire beauty, unspoiled, or so nature would have it. Untouched by restrictions the orchard has no measurement of good or evil. Just miles and miles of wandering, acres to dream by and hours to contemplate. In its complexed attire the orchard is nearly inconceivable, life contained in life, pregnant with magnificence. Yet the real existing beauty is its' simplicity. An all encompassing air which fills the entire volume of the orchard and seeps into my lungs filling them with innocence often times nearly forgotten and freedom too seldom felt.

A hernia. How stupid can a doctor be to tell her that? He knows damn right well it's her disease that's causing the internal bleeding, not to mention the half - hazard operation he performed last year. I'm surprised she even made it through that one.

She went through her fourth major operation last summer, and the second within one year. This time it was for a colostomy. What exactly is this? Basically, it's where the large intestine is removed and replaced with a long tube that comes out through a hole in the lower stomach. This hole is called a stoma.

This poor white - haired, seventy - six year old lady was not long ago one of the jolliest women I had ever seen. She hadn't a care in the world. She had a decent job and a great family who really cared for her. She had had cancer for some twenty - five years, but this past year was just too much.

This so - called hernia was causing her all kinds of problems but mostly embarrassment and disgust on Franny's part. It left unsightly bloodstains on the front of her dresses and left the skin around her stoma red, raw, and tremendously sore.

If the doctor suggests another operation, I couldn't go through with it, let alone Franny. I'd protest 'till my voice gave out. The Doc really butchered her last time. I realize he had to muscle his way through about seven inches of fat before he could get to the infected area, but he didn't have to start the job without finishing it in a tidy manner. Two weeks later Franny's incision was draining with a thick white pus, known as the basic staph infection from unsterilized "Weapons." The doctor claimed it was normal. I knew damn well it wasn't. If only I had the nerve to say something to him, I would have told him to stick his scalpel sideways.

I'll never forget the time I went to see Fran during the second week. She was laying in her bed with her heavy black eyes closed tighter than a can and her plump body was packed under the loose bed covers. Her hands were almost blue and the veins were bulging out like the stomach of a pregnant woman. Her light skinned face bled into her white head of hair that was sunk deep into her white head of hair that was sunk deep into the foam pillow. You could hardly distinguish where one started and the other left off. I just couldn't go through it again.

Ellen Courtemanche

Walk Softly Son

And never be too proud to be humble,
Or too quick in making friends with a foe.
Don't get disappointed if you stumble,
The road ahead is far from smooth you know.

Don't judge, by looks, they do not tell
what jealous minds hold, bitter from denials,
For the mightiest of men often fell
before the weak, deceived by kindly smiles.

So grow, with sharper eyes, and mind more keen,
And never feel that learning is a sin,
For ignorance, so much of it I've seen,
Because of wordly goods and shades of skin.

Remember just these simple words I say,
Walk softly son, you'll learn much more that way.

Here,

By The Lake.....

When the sun cashes in at the daysend,
And the evening breathes her soft, gentle sigh,
There's no lovelier moment I could spend,
Than here, by the lake, under starlitsky,

Here, where the pressures of day disappear,
And only those pleasures, I seek, are near,
Where clouds, if they are, are nowhere in view,
And each whispering wave brings something new,

A thought, a memory.... that touches my mind,
Of a dream, long ago, I never could find,
Here, where my friends are the lake and the sky,
And evening, breathing her soft, gentle sigh,

Where clouds, if they are, are nowhere in view,
And each whispering wave brings memories (of you).....

John Sanginario

John Sanginario

He approached the woman who stood under the street light. The circle of white around her convinced him that she must be a saint or at the very least an archangel.

"Please, gracious lady," he begged, "tell me how to find eternity."

She nodded and they both sat on the curb.

"Eternity comes from giving. If you give me money and I give you pleasure, we can tell the world of each other's gift and we'll go down in history for our giving."

And she gave him his eternity and he gave her money. The pleasure though was short - lived as he was sure the money had been. And soon, he forgot her name and she his.

The man travelled and was still searching when he saw a group of men chained together.

"Oh, how wonderful," he thought, "these men are bound in chains of love."

He asked these men about eternity and they told him.

"Eternity is found by taking. You will be talked about for your boldness and you will live forever."

So, the man followed this advice. He stole from rich and poor alike and people talked of him but they also grew angry and put him in prison. He was in prison a long time and after a while everybody forgot about him. He was an old man when he got out.

So, he was old, forgotten and discouraged. He hung his head and moped all the time. Until, one day he saw a little girl trying to reach an apple that was hanging out of her grasp. The man saw her and although he was old, he reached as far as he could and gave her the apple. He died never knowing he had found eternity.

Ron Muse

Time is Your Loom

You. You are carved out of love and living.
Experiences have brought you to where you are now.
You with your black as olive hair, and eyes full of touch...
You, with tidbits in an array forming your aura that many never really see.
You. I am glad for you that you persist, that you strive . . . that you dare to share and care and roll up your sleeves. Your all is involved.
You are carved out of determination, sanded by family ties, and supported by tidal motion.
You, your resisting conventionalism favors the seas' movement . . . a horizontal gravity that pulls and pushes. There are vertical gravities that are too standard to be unknown.
You are you, and it is joyfully understood.
Your aura, your motion, your determination spun into the all of you on the spinning wheel of time.
I have thought it would be bliss to be spun into such an intriguing weave.
My thoughts have not changed though time allows for such.
Weaves with many a fine thread spinning endlessly into patterns unique.
My threads collect, and weave as finery is gathered along the way.
In my tapestry woven strong, the threads do interweave.
You. You are spun out of love, and living.
Time is your loom.

ODE to Lefty

I found, one day, an old man, grey.
How sad, he seemed to be.
And though the others laughed at him,
I'm glad, he spoke, to me.

He told me of the many things that life had brought his way.
And he asked me if I knew of them
Then said, I would, someday.

His words were only words to me,
But then, I was so young.
But often, I remember them
when I am here among
the flowers,
the birds,
the green grass and trees,
For I know now that
in his words,
He spoke of all
of these,
And many things
that I won't learn
from all of Kingdom Come.
This man I knew,
They called
A Common Bum.

K. Drake

John Sanginario

Feelings of a Great Loss

A single tear falls next to a glass of beer.
Deep breaths of air are drawn into your lungs
in gasps.
The many voices of the mingling crowd, you
really don't hear.
And soon, after a few deep breaths, the raspy
feeling in your throat will pass.

There is a strange feeling of pain in your
chest.
And your stomach is filled with a sensation
of fear.
Soon the pain is replaced with loneliness,
as the words to a forgotten song echo through
your ears.

Now, the "old good times" fill your mind.
And the tears begin to fill your eyes.
You grope for the mug of beer, as if you
were blind.
And the sleeve of your shirt dries one eye,
as you breathe a deep sigh.

And another single tear falls next to another
glass of beer.

Rick Gordon



I'm so ugly,
and sad.
Why can't I be beautiful,
stunning.

If I were a tree
my bark
would be dry and cracked
my trunk
disfigured,

hopelessly
by the unbalanced
weight
of
its'
branches
Small deformed leaves
lasting only days or weeks,
then shrinking

I
i
f
e
less

falling to the earth.
The seasons would have abandoned
me
a victim of natures imperfection.
Birds would not nest,
nor squirrels hide,
fearing bad omen due to my hideous form.

As a cloud
my appearance would be dark,
spongy.

A large
lone
ominous thing.
Oh God - why bother
to create such a thing.
One so scarred
and horrid
as to turn away the eyes
of even the most sympathetic.

I bring only torrents and violent winds forth
so that I
may not suffer
alone.

Cynthia Snider

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH GETCHEL

Working at Wrentham State Hospital is one job that I will never forget. Having worked on the grounds crew at the hospital for eight months left me with many memorable incidents, the most memorable I am about to unfold.

It was my responsibility along with seven other crew members, to keep the endless rows of evergreen bushes trimmed and the huge lawns cut that surrounded all of the 15 half dilapidated, mammoth brick structures with rusting, black steel bars on every window that approximately eighteen hundred mentally retarded citizens call home. In addition to my regular duties, every Friday it was my job, along with a co-worker Donny Banks, to pick up and rake around every one of the fifteen green dumpsters that were located in the back of each building. Doing this extra job is how I had the pleasure of meeting Arthur Getchel.

Arthur was a little shorter than six feet tall and tipped the scales around 180 pounds. His dark complexioned face was covered with wrinkled weatherbeaten, leathery skin supporting a six day growth of gray bristle that looked tough enough to sharpen an axe on. His half dollar sized black eyes were set deep in his skull which made his forehead stick out profusely. He always wore the same attire, a red and black checkered wool shirt and a pair of baggy tan pants that came half way up his chest. The pants were secured in place with a thick, plain brown leather belt that had the most unusual buckle I have ever seen. It was just a big hunk of square lead that probably came off an old deep sea divers weight belt. These features coupled with the way he walked, back bent forward, head always looking down at the ground like he had a five pound weight tied around his neck, and two arms that dangled listlessly below his knees with the hugest pair of hands I have ever seen on a man, gave the impression that Arthur was not playing with a full deck. The truth is Arthur Getchel is the craziest son of a bitch up at Wrentham State Hospital and believe me that is quite an honor. He had to beat out a lot of good competition.

Whatever hopper Donny and I happened to be cleaning around, there was always this patient eyeing us intently at a distance. It was Getchel. You see Arthur liked collecting junk and was always crawling around inside them throwing things out he thought were valuable, half the time never bothering to pick up what he threw out. When my partner discovered that it was Arthur making the mess that we always had to clean up, he got very angry. So one day he started yelling at Getchel that he better stay out of the dumpsters or else. That was a costly mistake that Donny would never make again. Immediately after the harsh reprimand ended, Arthur Getchel snaped. He flung his long arms straight out and started making a noise like an airplane engine and ran straight at Donny. His huge cro-magnon-like hand crashed down on the top of Donny's head. My fellow worker went down for the ten count. Next, Arthur turned his attention towards me. He looked right through me with those big, black fish-like eyes. He started yelling at me, making no sense at all. What I could get out of it was that Arthur wanted to kill me because I was a miserable bastard.



Being called a miserable bastard didn't bother me that much, what troubled me was when Arthur whipped off his belt, swinging it around his head like there was an acorn attached to it instead of a two pound hunk of lead. My heart was beating so fast I thought it was going to jump out of my chest and run away. I started sweating like I had just ran a three minute mile. There weren't butterflies in my stomach, it felt more like buzzards flying aroundin there. I had reason to be scared, being in an insane asylum ready to get my skull dented in by a whacked-out patient.

I didn't know what to do, but whatever it was I had to do it fast. Arthur was walking towards me, veins popping out all over his face, screaming at the top of his lungs, swinging his belt so fast that it was making a noise like when a hard baseball comes whizzing by your head. When he was nine feet in front of me, I luckily blurted out, "Put that belt down or I'm gonna call security." Like all patients who are deathly afraid of security, the men in the white coats, Arthur threw down his belt and started running away into this huge field. What a relief, I felt as though Atlas just lifted the world from my shoulders.

Like most mental hospitals, Wrentham State was located in the boondocks where a patient could run off and be lost in the woods for days. I ran to the nearest building and called up the feared security men. Half a minute later I hung up the phone they came wheeling around the corner I was standing at, sirens buzzing, lights flashing. I pointed to where Getchel was running and they jumped out in hot pursuit. Five minutes later, an ambulance from the hospital building on the grounds came screeching around the same corner, and two more guards and a nurse hopped out. The nurse started to attend to my fallen comrade who was still in a fog. They caught up to Getchel in about ten minutes and were attempting to drag the screaming, spitting, scratching madman back to the ambulance. It took all four guards to hold him while the nurse gave Arthur a shot to calm him down as they sped back to the hospital.

All of this was unbelievable to me, just like I was having a nightmare. You see scenes like this on television or at the movies, but I was seeing it live in full color with no commercials. That day I received a rude awakening about some facets of life that are far from pretty, but never the less are still there.

Arthur Getchel spent a very peaceful night under sedation in the hospital after his unfortunate incident. Jimmy Padovano also had a peaceful night, only under a different kind of sedation administered at the local pub.

James Padovano

Rain Drops

Vapors,
glistening
particles,
stolen from the depths of the open sea.

Saturated
in shadowed
massivity.

Lingered,
in anticipation,
clutchingly
defying
natures gravity.

Its' body
top heavy
like leaded mercury,
weighted
reluctantly departing
sanctity.

Stagnation

To sit and think - so slow
Not a blink - the sun does not show.

On this cold and dismal day
The bold - go another way.

No one to call - though people are near
Time seems to stall - with no one to hear.

Just to drink here and think here
Just to think here and s
i
n
k
here.

Suzanne Shirar

Stephen Sheldon

The Murdering Lighthouse

The beam of light comes and goes,
but very little happens in that split
second or so.

But the lighthouse commits murder.

Every other second, the knife of light
is thrust into the body of night; and
the lighthouse controls the knife
of light.

The lighthouse commits murder.

There are no screams of pain we can hear.
For us, there are no feelings of fear.
The lighthouse knows no wrong or right,
and constantly stabs the night with the
light, until the day comes to end the
fight.

But the lighthouse commits murder.

Into the body of darkness the weapon of
light protrudes,
But the light is only a weapon used to
kill the night and the solitude; and
the lighthouse forces the light to intrude.

The lighthouse commits murder.

Rick Gordon



Mothers Day 1978

The poet, Joseph Langland, seemed to speak easily of his brother's death but I felt the tremor in his voice. I could not bear to meet his eyes -- one glance was enough -- for in them lay the agonizing sorrow, accepting the death but still questioning the reason for the atrocity. I didn't expect to be confronted with this pain today and tried to rid myself of the dreadful thoughts that clamored for my attention. Surely, if this man could expose his soul, then I too, as a fellow mortal, should also be allowed to describe the battle within mine. I wanted to shout "unfair" to our Maker -- the Omnipotent One! Why has this poet -- this man -- been given the tools to write of what is in his heart? Why has he been selected and not I? Surely my hurt is as great as his -- and deserves to be told as well?

His brother, my contemporary, was slaughtered five years before the birth of the boy. On the other side of the world, the boy's father-to-be lay waiting to be rescued -- a tiny atoll his only refuge. Surely the poet's brother would understand the intensity of my feelings, spoken on the day of the boy's baptism: "There shall be no more war, not for our child," I said, and the boy's father agreed as he tenderly cradled the child in his lanky arms. We nourished his spirit as well as his body and did not spare the time that was rightfully his. Together we flew kites, made music, prayed, laughed and cried. The boy grew into manhood, and accepted the task gracefully.

The day arrived when he responded to the stirrings of his conscience; his father and I, powerless to prevent our separation, reluctantly whispered our goodbyes as he left to become a Marine. The young man's brief leave at Christmas replenished our spirits, and caught in his new image, we hugged and kissed him as we wished him well and said goodbyes again.

Not all the young men of the boy's generation ran off to Canada for shelter. Fifty-four thousand shared the fate of the Poet's brother; and fortress - like hospitals sought the answers for countless numbers of others who were physically and spiritually maimed. In such a setting, the Marine, proud of his convictions to the last, whispered goodbye as his spirit took leave of the body.

Tresa Mohrmann

A Time to Say a Prayer

Slowly, ever so slowly, I made my way across the treacherous river. One foot went in front of the other with the caution of a tightrope artist. The current was strong. Where the hell - raising river came in contact with my legs, bubbly suds began to form, the impact of the collision causing spit drops of water to squirt into the air. The bottom was slippery. Green, slime - covered rocks speckled the bottom. It almost seemed like the bottom was covered with banana peels by the way I slipped. Whenever possible, my rigid body leaned against the raging current for fear of being caught in its gaping jaws. My legs felt like jelly. It was freezing cold. Clouds of cold steam protruded from my mouth. The cold arctic air wiggled down my back, and it caused me to shudder. A stinging sensation electrified my hands. My fingers were becoming as stiff as icicles. They as well of been somebody else's when you consider the difficulty I had in moving them. I couldn't even feel my nose, that's how cold it was.

Then it happened, I slipped. I tried an Indian dance to regain my balance, but it was futile. My feet skidded out from under me. As if I was getting ready to sit down in an imaginary seat, I fell in. Boy that water was cold. The shock of the icy water added pounds to my heart beat. My hip boots filled. Huge air bubbles gushed to the surface where they blossomed. My winter clothes sucked in water. I knew I had to get out of the water, and I had to get out quick. I crawled and squirmed the rest of the way to shore. While water droplets drizzled down my face partly obstructing my vision, numb feet carried me to my junky corroded "72" Pinto. My hip boots made a squeaky noise, similar to what a plunger does against a sink. I was shaking like a car without shocks on a bumpy road. Unfeeling fingers tried to manipulate the glossy door knob, but they were about as useful as tree limbs. With my left waterlogged boot, I clobbered the door knob. As I opened the door, I reflected upon how lucky I was to be alive. I said a prayer.

Kenneth Denis

UPON RETURNING

It was smaller than it should have been, much smaller. And quiet, not peaceful, just quiet. Everything around me showed signs of abandoned defeat and age.

The bottomless river with the unswimmable current and boateating whirlpools, the river where I had navigated the largest of ships and commanded enormous fleets, is now a shallow brook. That mountain which had thrashed so many of my sleds to pieces in winter and harboured the most dangerous of snakes in the summer, is nothing now but a hill. And the deep, engulfing forest where Robin Hood and his band of thieves had surely robbed the rich and given to the poor, just a few pine trees which even the birds pass by when searching for a home.

But the saddest, most drastic change was at the heart of this bygone fantasy land, my old protective home. The home that had kept me dry during rainstorms, and kept me warm while it snowed, and even kept me safe through a hurricane. The home which had been so happy to be part of our family had died. And it wasn't a fast painless death. The tear stained shingles, broken windows and fallen chimneys were hard facts of what my old loving home endured in the lonely years since we moved away. And now it's just a house. An empty, broken shell; a home that died - waiting to be reborn.

john cotter

COURAGE

Soldier, our 98 pound prizewinning German Shepherd, is a born fighter, but intensely protective toward our tiny Pomeranian, Timmy. How strong was the bond between them I hadn't realized until the day last spring when a friend of ours, visiting, came running from the pond in back of our home to tell me that Timmy had fallen through the ice.

Dashing out with Soldier at my heels, I could see little Tim paddling desperately in the large area of open water about 20 yards out. Reaching the shore I stepped out on the ice. My feet broke through.

"The ladder!" I cried to my friend. "Get the ladder in back of the barn!" But as I turned back I could see that small Timmy was weakening. We could never reach him in time. I thought suddenly of the times last summer when my wife would swim out to the middle of the pond and at a command from me, Soldier would swim out to her and tow her to shore.

The words were out before I could think -- Soldier! "Get Timmy!"

The big dog, whining at the pond's edge, didn't hesitate. He looked up at me, barked, and leaped onto the ice. One foot broke through, but he recovered and plunged ahead. Reaching the open channel, he dived in and grasped the struggling Pomeranian in his mouth. Turning, he tried three times to climb back up on the ice, but each time he slipped back. Apparently realizing the futility of this, he drew back a short way and then, his powerful legs churning the water furiously, he rammed his great chest against the jagged ice and smashed through two feet closer to shore. Again and again he did this, each time gaining a precious one or two feet.

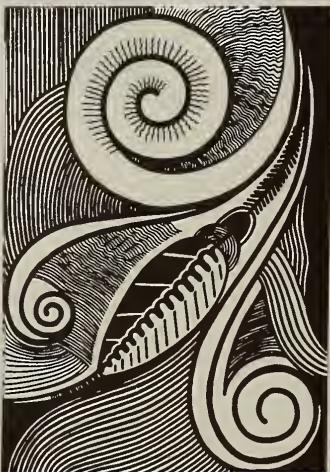
But these tremendous efforts were rapidly tiring him. Each surge grew weaker, until his progress was almost negligible. Still he persisted, the Pomeranian held firmly in his massive jaws.

I began taking off my outer clothing, but even as I did so, I wondered if in the pinch my courage would match that of the great black animal fighting silently for his and his companion's life.

Just then, however, my friend arrived with the long ladder. Together we eased it out on the treacherous ice. Crawling out, I reached the animals and digging my fingers into the scruff of the big dog's neck, I hauled them both to safety.

Tonight as I write this, Timmy, his elfish self again, is lying before the fireplace on the back of his bigger companion. But it is into the brown eyes of the shepherd that I look, and I see there the same calm courage that looked up at me that day from the icy waters of a northern lake, as he held up to me the trembling body of the small friend he risked his life to save.

Steven Peterson



THE SILENT TEAR OF A MARRIED WOMAN

A woman was married to a man.
Her life was molded around the man.
Instead of living for herself, she lived for a man.
Never knowing herself, never knowing her man.
Twenty years of silent understanding,
Seemingly nothing needed to be said;
For the man was content,
The woman was alive,
and only conversation was dead.
She wanted to say I love you, with more than a gesture;
But she thought her husband would laugh.
She wanted to feel in his eyes, what she felt for him
with no lies.
But she became and changed for the man;
Breathing after he, ignoring herself,
As to smile, as to laugh at the fool on the high pedestal shelf.
She wrote, and felt on paper with her mind,
A poem of the words that were so hard to find.
She hid the verse from her husband, in fear,
that he wouldn't understand, just laugh at what he would hear.
Leaves fall silently, bouncing greyly in the air,
One sunday, she died the same way.
As she did, there was an unheard sigh felt everywhere.
In the months to come the man found a poem,
Hidden underneath his books of comedy.
He had felt a loss, some pain, but there were no words.
Yet, it read of the pain, the words were all there.
Then he cried, and felt his head fall.
For he had felt, and loved the same,
But, never knew words could say it all.
He laughed at himself, and then walked away,
For he never told his love, like the words could always say.

This is her poem, for now nothing is just understood:

My Friend

You go through life saying I love you.
The words become automatic.
There've been times when we've both wanted to leave,
But this unspoken love, makes things stronger,
stronger then we both perceive.

What you think I said, isn't really what I meant
And sometimes it's so frustrating, when I can't say,
I love you, I love you so much my friend.

There's no competition between us,
Though sometimes it seems so,
And for many years I didn't know why,
I never said, I love you so.

We've had our fights, our love, our good times.
We've had our rich, our poor, our strength in bad times.
We've felt as lovers do, and yet,
I wanted you to know how I felt, but then,
I found it too hard to say I love you my friend.

They say, some things are better left unsaid,
They say, somethings are just understood.
They never change, they never understood what was said;
They said those things, even as Jesus bled.

So I'll take the chance, the risk, the pain.
Please don't think me foolish, or stupid or insane.
For I have to tell you:
I would die if you died not knowing,
That the way I feel about you will never end.
So now I'm saying :
I love you, I love you so much, my friend.



The air is dry and hot with the blazing sun beating upon the earth like the winds of a hurricane hitting without mercy and destroying everything in its path. It is mid afternoon with a clear sky and a slight breeze to ease the pain of the heat.

In front of me is an old tree where we used to play when I was young. So many times I have walked this path, breathing in the gentle scent of pine and dreaming of the past. Yet somehow it looks different, as if the sands of time were shifting and all that was is no more. There was a time when the tree seemed as high as a kite, yet now it seems small and quiet. No more will I climb great heights to see the color of the leaves in fall or the blanket of snow in winter. My days of climbing are over, yet I still can remember the beauty of fall, or the cold of winter, or the smell of pine in the air, even the wind making the top of the tree rock with its force. So many times I would come here to think. Sometimes I remember the laughter and the thrill of heights or just laying in the soft needles and dream of the beauty of life and all its wonders.

Ah, a cool breeze has struck to ease the heat and once more I am awake. There is a squirrel rustling up the tree, as if running from an enemy that is not there. Now I can see things in a new way, as with the birth of a child - a new beginning and a new start, growing into the complications which change our lives. Maybe there will be no need to return here. Maybe it is time to find new places - maybe.

James Simmons

The king

I once saw an eagle,
His majesty in flight,
Was a scary, but lovely sight;
And his grace was much like a sea - gull.

When I first saw him though, and I
didn't know why, he seemed more like a
sparrow than an eagle in the sky.
He was quite far away when my eyes
first set upon him; and he circled
high over head while searching out
his victim.

I once saw an eagle that would take - off
at will, and then descend with great
accuracy when moving - in for the kill.
The sight was a little bit frightening
as the hunter struck like a flash
of lightning.

He went down alone into the woods,
and came up with his clutches full
of goods.
Then he subtly waved his powerful
wings, and I watched him drift off
to nothing.

Rick Gordon



Ice - cycles melting

Winter's
Skeleton
of storms,
lingering,
the living dead.
Seething with
salivating particles,
glistening
drops
dripping
ever
s
o
slowly.

Suzanne Shirar

Listen! The mountains call!
The magic is there
The song comes to me
The life refreshes me.
Moving, moving,
life passion renewed,
My spirit lives!
Earth, sky, wind, sun,
Ecstasy!

A. Moreau

UPON RETURNING

MAYBE I'LL NEVER TALK AGAIN

We live in a world of definition and analyzation.
And when we say a word too much
it becomes just a word and not what it truly is -
A feeling!

Too bad.

Maybe I'll never talk again.

john cotter

It is smaller than it should be -
And quieter, not peaceful, just quiet.
See the tear stained shingles,
Hear the silence of despair.
So unlike the memories,
I've kept with such great care.
It is smaller than it should be -
But mostly it's a lonely dream
Waiting to be found,
By another lonely dreamer.

john cotter

I sat alone at my table; the lunch time crowd had me walled in on three sides. I held a cigarette over the ash tray, tapping the ashes to the beat of the music. The remains of someone else's lunch rested at the other end of the table.

I didn't see her walking over; she dropped an arm load of books on the table and sat down. She made a remark about the fact that I usually sit alone, intending it to be humorous. But it didn't produce much of a smile from me.

"You look depressed," she said.

"Not any more than usual. I'm O.K." Actually I was in a good mood, but I had a small particle of roast beef stuck between my two front teeth and I just couldn't seem to dislodge it, which was why I wasn't smiling. I felt a bit queasy when I saw her earlier that morning. I think I had too much to drink the night before, but I wasn't sure. I couldn't remember.

She hit me with a series of rather picky little questions, obviously attempting to figure out what was bothering me, but I didn't mind. I enjoyed the company.

"Everybody's disturbed about something," she said. "How can you not be with everything that's going on these days."

The silent battle between my tongue and the piece of roast beef was raging while she talked.

"Don't worry. You can't stay depressed forever," she said, putting her hand on my arm.

I was trying to figure out why she came over to talk to me. Maybe I was the only person in the place at that moment that she knew well enough to talk to. I've known her vaguely for quite a few years. She's rather attractive - - - a nice smile, decent figure, rather abundantly endowed, but too tall. She's taller than I am and I've sort of resented her inwardly because of it. She also has very nice eyes; not the kind that search search you up and down, looking for something that can be salvaged.

We were both silent for a moment, listening to the music and the activity around us. She decided to break the uncomfortable silence.

"Are you into music very much?" she asked.

"Not much. I like listening, though," I said, hiding my teeth.

"You seem like you're into studying. Is there something wrong with your mouth?"

I shook my head no.

She started fumbling through her pocketbook. "I'll be back in a flash," she said.

She was probably going to get something to eat. This would give me a precious three, maybe four minutes to devote to oral hygiene. As soon as she dipped out of sight, I searched furiously for something to use for the task at hand. There was nothing thin enough for a tooth pick, so I started hunting for some dental floss. I spotted a tiny thread on the pocket of my shirt and I carefully removed it, inch by inch.

I slid the delicate thread between my teeth, and out it came. I crunched the little brown bastard between my thumb and forefinger and flicked its corpse onto the carpet.

She was on her way back, maneuvering through the crowd with a sandwich and a half pint carton of milk.

"Well, what kept you?" I asked with a Gargantuan grin.

"The line's pretty bad up there. Care for half a sandwich?"

"No thanks."

"It's roast beef."

"No thank you."

I watched her eating; I wasn't staring rudely, just watching through the corner of my eye. She ate delicately, never forgetting her femininity. I made a witty remark about the crowd, but she didn't give much of a smile.

"You look kind of depressed," I said.

"Not any more than usual. I'm O.K."

Shawn Laflamme

Ride the wind, snowflakes,
With delicate defiance
Attack the earth with beauty!

john cotter

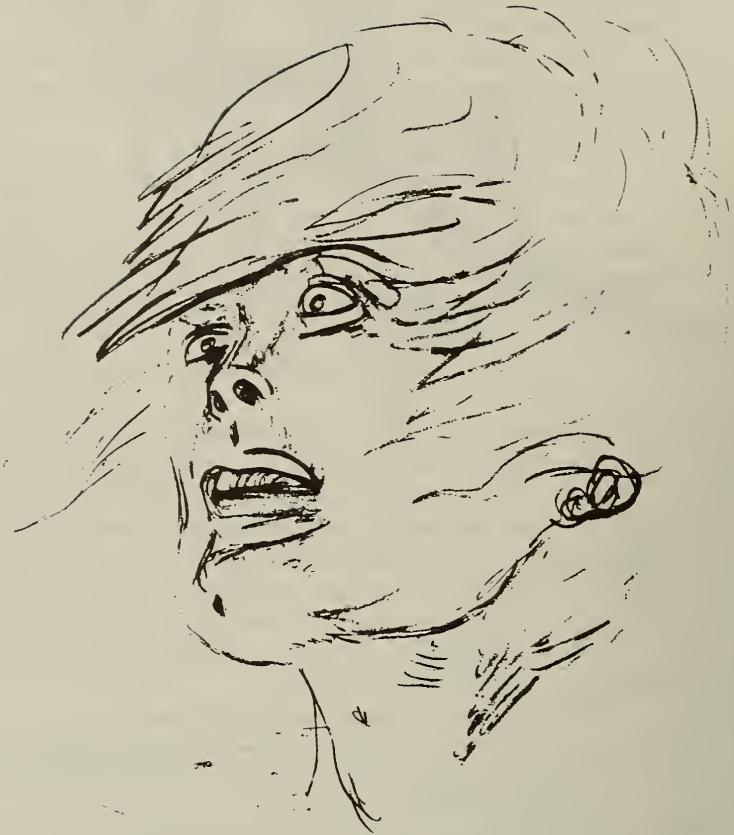
Summer sun, moonlit night.
I hear the call of your heart in flight.
Do not wander so far away,
The moon can not fend you in the day.
The sun can not cure your endless weeping.
The moon can not awaken your lover sleeping.

It was his time,
They told you so.
and when its time,
we all must go.
No matter the time,
Be it fast or slow
none can escape
deaths velvet blow.

Fall has come; moonlight sallow
upon the path so bleak and narrow,
lies your body, still and cold.
Away to your lover your heart has stoled.
And through the winter your body lies
Never a burial, how the months do fly.

Summer sun, moonlit night.
Together your lover and you delight
to traipse upon that path so narrow
to find your bones; the home of sparrows.

Darleen Carrier



Echoes of Howl

Oh, my hound dog died last night in the pouring rain,
The last howl I heard was one of pain...
All the dogs barks ended with his breath,
Cause my hound dogs last howl, ended in death...

My body sprang from out of my bed,
As I heard the echoes of howl rush through my head...
I say the echoes of howl rush to my brain,
Echoes of howl... I'm going insane.

I was with my chick when the howl sounded off,
Upon that moment, I immediately went soft...
I ran at the door and into the street,
There lay my hound dog, already fast asleep...
I say echoes of howl rush to my brain,
Echoes of howl... I'm going insane

Tears rolled from my eyes and down my cheeks,
Watching his blood run into the street...
Oh, my hound dog died last night in the pouring rain,
The last howl I heard was one of pain...
I say echoes of howl rush to my brain,
Echoes of howl... I'm going insane.

Keith Litchfield

Day Break

Helios' spirit rising,
perseveringly
Bleeding, screaming
puckered red!
Swelled like drops of mouth watering
tangerine,
melting into heavens
golden thread.

Ascending from Artemis' virginal womb,
from her eroded crust
Shimmering from brachthus
to
brachthus.

A burning flamboyant energy,
pulsating, bubbling
with heated
brilliant
splendor.

A beating breathing inferno.
Heavens luminary bud,
In full bloom.

Suzanne Shirar

A FOWL TRIP SOUTH

Bluebell and I were heading south on the turnpike, munching moon pies and sipping R. C. Colas, when out of nowhere our senses were shattered by the RRRAAAAWWWRRRR of a giant block - long truck as it barreled past our struggling Merc, eclipsing us in a deep shadow. As the truck roared past, inches away, sucking the car into its slip stream, an overwhelming bedlam of sound engulfed us -- a sea of insane squawks and cluckings.

"Chickens!" Bluebell hollered ecstatically.

Thousands of chickens peered at us through the windows on our left side. Stretching for a mile back of us, a wall of Leghorns was going by. Then they were past us and the mammoth truck pulled into the lane directly ahead of us, shedding a stream of white feathers that struck the windshield and billowed around us and in the windows like a summer snowstorm. Almost immediately we were enveloped in a wrenching, fetid, kick-in-the-stomach stench; it swept over us in a tidal wave of nausea.

"When the swallows come back to Capistrano . . ." some trio chimed in on the radio.

"Gaak! What a stink!"

"Maybe you'd better pass him," suggested Bluebell through her handkerchief.

"Yeah. Here goes."

I floored the Merc, but nothing happened. She was going her limit already. Ahead, the driver of the chicken truck settled into the groove, a lumbering juggernaut rolling along at 55, spraying feathers and a dark-brown aroma over the countryside.

Again and again I edged out into the left lane, gamely trying to pass, but it was no use. The truck stayed tantalizing just out of reach, the chickens squawking delightedly, their necks sticking out of the iron cages, their beady red eyes wild with excitement, as the driver happily headed for market. Occasionally, a stray egg whistled past or splashed into the radiator grill to join the dead butterflies, grasshoppers and dragonflies.

"I have to go to the toilet. " Already we had stopped at 74 gas stations so that Bluebell could go to the toilet. Her output was incredible.

"You'll just have to hold it."

It had begun to rain -- big ripe summer drops. The windshield wipers were stuck and now I drove with my head craned out the window in order to see. Rain ricocheted off my face and splattered everything within a two foot radius. It carried with it chicken feathers and other by-products that streamed back from the truck ahead.

The rain petered down to a feathery drizzle and came to a steamy stop. Our scrambled egg Merc continued down chicken lane until the menagerie ahead of us, thankfully, boomed into a turnoff. Peace reigned once again. A few feathers clung to the headlights here and there. But the last lingering aroma of the barnyard finally departed through the rear windows.

Just then a one - pump gas station came into view, crouching amid the cornfields next to a white shack that had once been a diner but was now sinking into the wet, amber clay, carrying with it its faded red sign with a single word EAT. It was a typical Bluebell pee stop and we pulled off the highway for a much needed rest.

Maurice G. Reidy



TIDELESS WATERS

There was no tide to his life.
He came when he wished to and
went when he wanted to.
His life was like the waves in
the sea; starting out small, growing
to a great crest, then crashing against
the shore like the impressions he made
on the minds of his friends . . .

Some say his mind was like the small
stagnant pools one finds in a lonely
coppice in the deep and forgotten forest.
But this was not so.
His ideas were deep and rippling and remained
a mystery to many but not to me or to those who
knew him well.

Some say too, that he was cold as a wintery breeze
off a frozen lake.
But this was not so.
To me he was like the balmy breeze that one feels
while walking on the silvery sands of a beach or
the soft rustling of a warm wind through the out-
stretched arms of the deep, green trees.

Yes, he was tideless, like the tideless waters.

Darleen R. Carrier

SUMMER DREAMS

Painted like the canvas
of an artist's dream,
the heavens shimmer
in their veil of purple,
pink, orange, rose, and blue.
Like watercolors -
dropped and spreading
through the light cotton weave
of gossamer.
The sun lies, resting,
on the heather mountains.
Lingering -
till the last possible moment.

Chilly with the onset of dusk
the breeze stirs about
in the growing shadows
as the trees project
their delicate tracery
on the frozen earth below.

The snow, white at midday,
now sparkles with brilliant stars
of color,
a glorious mirror
of pastel sunbeams;
a painful beauty,
fading with the sinking fire -

Those last few straying reflections
blending with the dark of night.
The glory is ended.
The sun has set.
All hope of summer
is once more gone.

Veronica Hradecky

FORTUNE TELLING BY CHINESE ASTROLOGY

The snake fascinates the monkey.
Monkey,
She dances round and round him.
Snake, whenever he gets the whim,
Bites her on the neck
Sinking his fangs in
Viciously.
Monkey cries, "Alas!
I must flee!"
But the next day
The silly monkey is back to play
Some more.
Round and round she dances --
The two pairs of eyes glittering --
Snake talks interestingly,
Forked tongue flickering.

Eleanor Finnerty

The oculus of optic lenses

Sometimes when you look
Straight through them,
they are,
crying.
Salivating windows
beckoning crystal
mirrored
faces.

Suzanne Shirar

It was a beautiful day for a walk, or a run, and the young boy whom this story is about, like most all young people was very content in just lying around in his backyard, doing a lot of nothing.

The boy's parents, like most parents, decided that there was much better to be done with such a wonderful afternoon; therefore, they requested that their son accompany them for an adventurous walk in the woods surrounding their house. Both parents thought it would be good learning experience for the boy. As a matter of fact, he began to enjoy the thought of striding through the dense wood, and enjoy the pleasures of nature.

They left there small house in quite a hurry, not to miss anymore of what awaited them in the dense woods, beneath the bright sun.

The mother soon began to feel obligated in making sure that her son did not wander off too much in any one direction. Before he had even left her sight, she insisted that he walk close to her. The father thought this to be a good and opportune time to offer the boy his knowledge of the forest. The father was not aware, however, that his son had many a time taken on upon himself to learn things about the abundant life surrounding his house.

The father began relentlessly to flood a river of information about the trees, the different animals, and many facts about other life forms into the boy's unwanted ears. The boy soon became disgusted with his father's well-intended facts, and names of trees, and species of animals, and decided that a dam should be constructed; one in each ear, for the rest of that day.

Mother, content that her son was safe by with her husband, had gone ahead quite a way in order to prepare a good route on which her family could follow. She thought mostly of the boy wanting him to see as much as possible, knowing that there was only a day in which to do so; at least this is how she thought at the moment.

The boy's mother now sat smiling, anxiously awaiting the arrival of her now enlightened son. Upon their arrival, the mother looked at the two with impatient eyes. Instantly she asked of her son the facts he had learned so far on their journey. The boy would not answer. He looked very upset. Both mother and father inquired what it was that had disturbed him. He would not answer. He looked grim, and resentful of most of what occurred that day. The boy's parents, perplexed and completely tired out because of their vigorous self-imposed demands, lay down under the sheltering shade. They, looking old, examined their son with sad eyes. The boy sat motionless on a nearby log in disillusionment of his parent's love.

Mother and father had fallen asleep, and it was not soon after, that the young boy rose from the log to investigate a curious light radiating in the distance.

The parents, hearing the footsteps of their son, awoke slowly to see the boy running in the opposite direction of home. They ran after their son, hopelessly trying to overtake him. It was quite some time before the parents realized the futility of the chase; finally the father stopped, and then the mother, with flooded eyes they watched their son full of curiosity, run towards the light from a clearing in another part of the dense, restricting woods.

Robbie Smithwood

The front seat of the car was cluttered with wrinkled wrappers, greasy French fries, and soiled napkins. I slouched down and bit into my hamburger, and half of the contents fell into my lap. I made a vain attempt to clean it off, smearing it instead. The radio blared the latest tune, and I sat, eating and watching the sun set on the nearby supermarket.

The disk jockey screamed something at me with his unbearable voice, and then without warning the radio sank into a softer, more graceful tone; one that came back to me slowly as it progressed. It was a song I recalled from several years ago; one that is rarely played any more. I couldn't remember the title; I couldn't even remember who sang it. Maybe I never knew. I was sure it meant something to me at one time, but I couldn't remember that, either. I straightened up, brushed off the lettuce and pickles, and chewed more slowly.

I listened and looked out at the dirty snow-piled high on both sides of the street. I mumbled some of the words to the song as best as I could remember them, and thought of a girl I knew once. I thought of a hot afternoon in August, the sun that makes brown skin browner, and the sound of the train screeching in the distance along the tracks, through the woods near Robbins Pond.

The disk jockey disrespectfully pierced into the last few seconds of the song and turned my attention back to my food. I slouched back down, took another bite, and returned to the reality of twenty-two degrees in Boston with partial clearing, and the lettuce on the seat.

Shawn Laflamme

It is summer once again
in this coastal town.
Life has returned after a long
silent hibernation.
People are all around.
Happy, laughing people.
Even the seagulls laugh
along with them.
The fishermen are busy day
and night. The stench of bait
and decayed fish on the docks
is repulsive, yet fascinating
in the warm, moist air.
These few months build the lives
of the people here. It is their
survival.
The shops in town are always
buzzing with tourists. Some leave and
more come. The town swells,
in size, sometimes so big you think
We all might go out to sea.
But as fast as it comes it
leaves.
And the only noise is the crashing
waves and the seagulls, who no longer
laugh, but cry out of loneliness
until next year.

Marie Trottier



RAIN OR TEARS?

Trees slashing back and forth like a ring masters whip.
Arching out like a tiger ready to attack its prey.
The gray clouds move silently on.
The city buildings and alleyways absorb the wet almost as
if they wish to get rid of the evidence.
There is only the company of papers shuffling about in
the street.
A crack of thunder, a stroke of lightning, and his tears
begin to fall.
He cries in the darkness as if he does not want us to
know that we have failed Him.
The whistling of the wind seems to cry out - - Why . . . Why?

Beth Callahan

Serenity at Sea

The sea is calm,
The air is cool,
The clouds about
hang low,
The snow white
crests
so gently break
beneath my trusty
bow.

A flash of light
A gentle breeze,
A flashing star,
or three.
A mother nature
in her best,
Displaying all
to me.

A drop of rain,
A whirling wind,
A chill runs through
my spine,
But not from rain
nor wind,
nor sea,
But for
tonight,
She's mine. . .

John Sanginario

The Difference

The difference between
young and scared
and
old and bewildered,
is the passage of time,
and
too many disillusioned dreams
shattered by stark reality.

Donna Flanagan

Stand still,
and I'll take your picture.
Living proof, in Kodacolor.
Mine now and forever.
At least in my scrapbook.

Donna Flanagan

Crowded world of dreams.
Detail is an inconsistency.
Dreams are like far off mists . . .
They hold mystery from the distance;
Close up they are so different.

K. Drake

HOLLOW ECHOES

I recall your words,
spoken not so long ago,
They were gifts
I'd waited long to hear.
They were testaments of your sincerity,
Clarifying my confusion and uncertainty.
But somehow, somewhere between
then and now the words have slipped away;
Evaporated from lack of nourishment.
Gone.
And still, I can't quite figure out,
what you meant to say. . . .
Just the sound of their hollow echoes,
and the look in your brown eyes.

Donna Flanagan

This night, you sit in the darkness.
Knowing sleep would be a perfect escape.
If your brain wasn't working in circles;
Disclaiming logic as a bastard son.

The poet said. "Fame is a cruel mistress."
But you were more than willing to pay her price.
And you wonder as your ears echo the silence.
If being used, is such a horrible fate.

There are ghosts trudging by you in silence
Not always seen, but always somewhere
The moonlight makes them look pale and wasted
as they bemoan their shapelessness

The stale night air smells so bitter
Your ghosts reek of mortality
As they curse at the times you sold out.
They are the ghosts of dead dreams.

The universe's balance seems so delicate
As does your precarious sanity.
You stare fixedly and motionless until morning
because survival is the most precious dream.

Ron Muse

Goodbye

That first nite - I saw your laughter,
I felt your excitement - your sadness -
I touched you.

After, when I would see you, the more I wanted to
see you and when I tried not to -
I loved you.

Once we needed each other; a few times
you needed me when I always needed you -
I missed you.

Maybe if I hadn't touched you; or loved you
or missed you, I could let you go and
come back and wouldn't care where or when.

But I did.

john cotter



I walk the streets
the busy streets
the silent streets
the cold streets

My coat is torn
The winter wind enters
silently
powerfully
frigidly

People march by me from all sides
They look at me
hostily
pitifully
matter of factly

The wind grabs at my hair.
The wind grabs at everyone's hair.
A girl waiting to get on a bus
She turns to me
She looks at me
She smiles at me
I have no bus fare
She leaves me
The bus slaps my face with exhaust
It drifts in the air as a fare - thee -
well. It chokes me. I gag and must spit
I must spit
I will spit
I do spit

The heretofore quiet jester wind lays
idle and with a laugh guides the saliva
on my shoe.
An old man smiles at me
His hat tumbles down the street like
a plaid wheel. He curses at the
jester wind.

Alone again I cough
A loud cough
A sympathetic cough
A raspy cough
Cough has lived with me for a
few days and doesn't plan to leave
until I stand straight

I don't plan to stand straight
until Cough leaves.

And on the treadmill we go.

Ron Muse

The woman dancer looks bored on stage.
Only her G - string separates her from innocence
She stands erect and limp and waits for the music
We all await the music.

At a table , a man slouches, drinking Scotch.
Drunk, another belt should put him away.
He is one of many but he feels alone.
He leers at the dancer and awaits the music.

The bartender wipes the bar with a wet rag.
It is almost his quitting time.
When the dance is over, he can leave.
He stares at his watch and waits for the music.

The houselights darken and the spotlight stares.
The spotlight makes the dancer seem white and pure.
Behind the dancer, her shadow appears on the curtain.
The shadow awaits the spotlight, only.

After the music ends, the man goes home.
He will come back when he fights with his wife.
He will get a buzz and watch the show.

The bartender is gone, too.
He will return tomorrow night.
It's his job and he does it for pay.

The dancer will work again, too.
The music is a record, she carries with her.
It is heard all over the country.

The spotlight doesn't live outside the bar.

Ron Muse

Chaplin's Ghost

Water falls of invisible
inward
tears.
Protruding from
abdominal depths
push
outward.

Hidden in crowded numbness
Compressingly,
Smothering,
Suppression.

Turns
toward
laughter.
Uncontrolled happiness,
obscene joy!

Suzanne Shirar

THE JUNIOR PROM

The savage tribal rite was nearing its final and most vicious phase. It was the glorious aftermath of Gardner High School Junior Prom, and I, along with my buddy Hector and his date, headed down Route 140 to Gardner's infamous nite spot, BO RICH.

The joint was already crowded when we arrived. A giant red and yellow beacon of a sign welcomed all poor souls, and set the stage for this mission establishment. An aura of undefined sin was always connected with the name "BO RICH". Sly winks, nudgings and adolescent "dirty jokes", made it the "in" spot for such a momentus revel.

Its waiters were rumored really to be secret henchmen of the Mafia. But the only thing we knew for sure was that anyone on the far side of seven years could produce any known drink without question.

The decor ran heavily to mustard, beer and catsup stained table cloths and plastic violets. The musical background was provided by a legendary jukebox that stood seven feet high, featuring red and blue cascading waterfalls that gushed endlessly through its voluptuous facade. In full 200-watt operation, it could be felt, if not clearly heard, as far as Winchendon to the North and as far South as Westminister. A triumph of American aesthetics.

We occupied the only remaining table and I instructed the beady-eyed waiter to bring me and my buddy "burbon on the rocks", a manly beverage I had often heard my old man order at the Lafayette Lounge. The girls ordered the usual "pink ladies" and we then sat back to survey the crowd and study the greasy menu.

When the waiter came back with our poison, we all ordered BO RICH's special deluxe combo pizza and then sat back to s

When the waiter came back with our poison, we all ordered BO RICH's special deluxe combo pizza and then settled down to some serious drinking. Remembering how my old man would have dealt with this sort of situation, I raised my glass and said suavely, "Well, here's mud in your eye."

"Yep," Hector parried wittily, hoisting his glass high and slopping a little burbon on his pants as he did so.

Swiftly I chug-a-lugged the drink down, in a devil-may-care manner to impress everyone. Hector followed suit. Down it went--a screaming 90-proof rocket searing savagely down my gullet. For an instant I sat stunned, unable to comprehend what had happened. Eyes copiously watering, I had a brief urge to sneeze, but my throat seemed paralyzed. My companions swam before my misted vision; and Hector seemed to have disappeared under the table. He popped up again. Face beet-red, eyes bulging, jaws slack, tongue lolling.

In the meantime the waiter had appeared out of the mist with the steaming, hissing pizza and I came back to earth long enough to force-feed myself most of my share of the goo. The moment I started on my second drink, I knew something was not kosher with my innards and mumbling my apologies, I struggled to my feet. A strange rubbery numbness had struck my extremities. I tottered from chair to chair, grasping for the wall. There was a buzzing in my ears.

Twenty seconds later, I was on my knees, gripping the bowl of the john like a life preserver in pitching seas. Hector, imitating me, as usual, lay almost prostrate beside me, his body racked with heaving sobs.

Pizza, bourbon and everthing I had eaten for the past week--all of it came rushing out of me in a great roaring torrent--out of my mouth, my nose, my ears, and my very soul. Then Hector opened up, and we took turns reching and shuddering. For long minutes, the two of us lay there limp and quivering, swelling to high heaven, too weak to get up.

Finally, we returned to the table, ashen-faced and shaking. Hector, his coat stained and rumpled, sat Zombie-like across from me. The girls didn't say much. It was the absolute high of the Junior Prom: the rest was anticlimax.

Maurice G. Reidy

THE TREES OF OCTOBER

I found out on a rainy Saturday in October that money really does grow on trees.

For when I looked out in the backyard the maple tree had emptied its pockets; so that many pounds of golden schillings had fallen to the ground.

And the wind was the beggar that swept those schillings off into his arms so that he could pay the sun to make an appearance.

Ah, Spring,
I want to grab you and squeeze you,
till my strength gives out.
Racing, leaping, stretching and dancing,
giggles and laughs, and smiles unending.

Beth Callahan

Donna Flanagan

BEST IN SHOW

With the advent of Candlemas Day, the dreary isolation of too many weeks is ready to be violated; and when a bright sunny day comes around, the restless ones in our house head for Bolton Flats to see the sights that the heavy hand of winter has produced. The tired Rambler wheezes and groans up Wheeler's Hill, silently coasts down the narrow roadway, and rests at the center of the marsh. A major exhibit is scheduled for today -- we are the first in line to view "The Ice Palace."

The marsh, crisp and silent with sunlit brilliance, would compere for footage in *Zhivago*. Untouched by human habitation, it rests between snow clad hills and is interrupted only by the roadways. Low lying thickets near each side of the road attest to the violence of last week's storm. Their whiplike branches, curiously adorned with platters of transparent ice, are tantalizing samples of the quality we will see in this three-dimensional show.

In happy anticipation we leave the car and focus upon the tall poplars that frame the edges of the flats. With their frosty branches thrusting skyward like unkempt straggly clusters of grey hair, they form a stern backdrop for the massive willow standing in the center of the marsh. It's obvious that the artist was in his gold period when he fashioned this display. In a few weeks this graceful and drooping tree will come full circle and be the envy of its neighbors. Already the swelling buds are shining evidence of life -- a warm welcome in this cold crypt.

A series of volcano - like mounds are between the willow and our little group of spectators. Crested with jagged ice forms left over from the Nashua's rampage, they are covered with web-like patterns cast from the tree's branches. They seem to be on the verge of eruption. By summer's end these hillocks will have provided housing for sandpipers, split level accomodations for hedge hogs, and terraces for sun bathing turtles and water snakes.

Without warning, the stillness is invaded by the shrieking and cawing of a huge crow, wings flapping furiously, as he dips in and out among the mounds. Seconds later a second crow emerges from behind one of the humps, and making futile attempts at elevation, skitters across the ice. In scolding fashion the airborne crow continues the chase. They disappear into the willow, ready to take part in the trembling life to come as silently spring rides in.

Time forces us to leave; but halfway up Wheeler's Hill, the car stops. All heads turn backward to capture a lasting memory of the willow -- our choice for Best in Show.

Tresa Mohrman

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*special thanks to linda and jeff
for their help*

*the i magazine is published by
students of mount wachusett
community college*

